

D.I.Y.

Project page for students and teachers

A PARLIAMENT THAT'S WITH IT

One of the most important functions of a parliament is to serve as a meeting place for elected representatives to come together to talk. In fact, the word parliament comes from the French word *parlement*, which means a speaking conference.

Over the years, parliaments have adapted to changes in the way we communicate, particularly with the rapid technological advances of the last few decades.

We have come a long way from the origins of the Australian parliament which date back over 1,000 years to medieval England. Back then all parliamentary communication was face to face, occasionally with sword in hand.

Today, the internet creates enormous opportunities to communicate with hundreds, even millions of people with just the click of a mouse. This high speed interaction allows direct communication between the elected and the electors, as well as increasing awareness, accountability, transparency and participation in the parliamentary process.

Well connected

Members and senators recognise the immense benefits of keeping up to date with the latest information technology. When elected they are allocated a laptop and a Blackberry. Many also already have, or soon get, their own iPad, iPhone or similar device.

This means you can send a message instantly to your local MP via email or an online form. You can find out where they are and what they are doing through their home page.

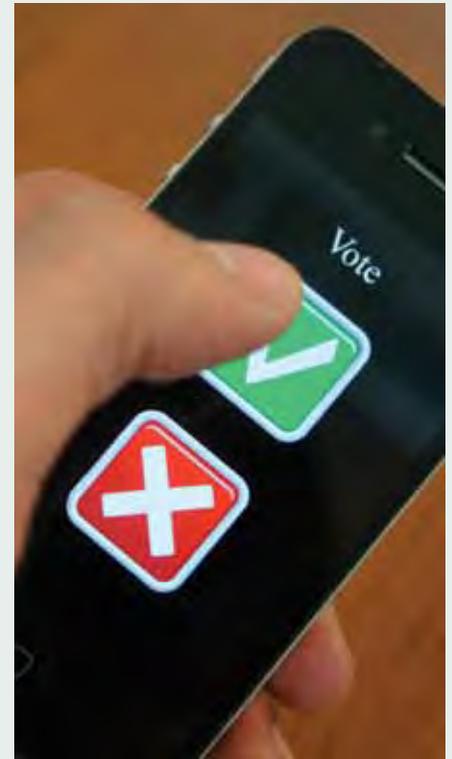
And you can download their speeches and media releases or follow them on social media.

Most members and senators have embraced social media such as Twitter. For example Kevin Rudd (Griffith, Qld) is a frequent tweeter and has more than one million followers.

One of the most prolific tweeters is Ed Husic (Chifley, NSW) who tweeted 4,719 times between October 2010 and October 2011.

The positives of using social media, email and the internet for members are obvious. Communication is quick, simple and members are able to talk directly with their constituents.

On the negative side, this can mean a massive increase in the workload for



E-VOTE: Electronic voting has been trialled

